IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (currently amended) A method for facilitating selection of at least one shipping carrier using a network-based system including a server and at least one device connected to the server via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving shipping information from a user via the device;

comparing the ~~received~~ shipping information against pre-stored information;

selecting at least one shipping carrier which matches the ~~received~~ shipping information; ~~information; and~~

displaying the selected shipping carrier based on the shipping information; and~~information.~~

defining at least one of a user identification number and a password for each department related to the at least one shipping carrier.

2.   (original) A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of receiving shipping information comprises the step of receiving at least one of a package type, a place of origin, a destination, a Latest delivery date, a Latest time, and a Weight of the package.

3.   (original) A method according to Claim 2 wherein said step of selecting at least one shipping carrier comprises the steps of:

retrieving an optimum shipping carrier and associated costs; and

downloading the optimum shipping carrier and associated costs.

4.   (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of displaying the selected shipping carrier based on the shipping information further comprises the steps of:

displaying at least one of a carrier, a rate, a shipping method and delivery times details of the shipping~~the optimum~~ method; and

displaying at least one other alternative carrier including a name of the alternative carrier, a rate of the alternative carrier, a shipping method and delivery times details of the alternative carrier.

5.   (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of receiving shipping information from~~data from~~ a user further comprises the step of receiving a user identification and a password for authentication purposes.

6.   (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of displaying further comprises the steps of:

accessing a website of the selected shipping carrier; and

generating a shipping label on at least one of an attached printer and a network printer.

7.   (original) A method according to Claim 1 wherein the shipping information is received from the user via a graphical user interface.

8.   (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 further comprising the step of validating compatibility based on the ~~received~~ shipping information to determine whether a resulting optimum shipping method is capable of meeting key parameters defined by a user.

9.   (original) A method according to Claim 8 further comprising the step of guiding the user to the optimum shipping method.

10.   (currently amended) A method for selecting at least one shipping carrier using a network-based system including a server coupled to a centralized database and at least one device connected to the server via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

authenticating a user ~~based on a pre-defined criteria; and~~via at least one of a first user identification number and a first password before accessing a shipping wizard configured to select an optimum shipping method;

authenticating the user via at least one of a second user identification number and a second password after accessing the shipping wizard and before accessing a maintenance wizard configured to maintain the centralized database; and

launching at least one of a shipping wizard to select an optimum shipping method and a maintenance wizard to maintain the centralized database.the shipping wizard and the maintenance wizard.

11. (canceled)

12. (original) The method according to Claim 10 wherein the device and the server are connected via a network and wherein the network is one of a wide area network, a local area network, an intranet and the Internet.

13. (currently amended) A method for facilitating selection of at least one shipping carrier using a network-based system including a server coupled to a centralized database and at least one device connected to the server via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

authenticating a user via a first set of pre-defined criteria before providing access to a shipping wizard configured to provide an optimum shipping method;

accessing a maintenance user interface after the user has been authenticated based on the first set of pre-defined criteria;a user has been authenticated based on pre-defined criteria; and

authenticating the user via a second set of pre-defined criteria after the user has been authenticated based on the first set of pre-defined criteria and before providing capabilities to the user to maintain the centralized database; and

providing capabilities to the user to maintain the centralized database.

14. (original) A method according to Claim 13 wherein said step of providing capabilities further comprises the steps of providing at least one of a functionality that permits the user to register a new carrier, modify an existing carrier, add locations, edit locations, add departments, edit department profiles, add users, and edit user profiles.

15.   (original) A method according to Claim 14 wherein said step of providing capabilities further comprises the steps of downloading and displaying various performance metrics.

16.   (currently amended) A web-based shipping system for facilitating selection of at least one shipping carrier, said system comprising:

a client sub-system comprising a browser;

a centralized database for storing carrier information;

a server sub-system configured to be coupled to said client sub-system and said <u>centralized</u> database, said server sub-system further configured to:

receive shipping information from a user via the client <u>sub-system;</u><s>system;</s>

compare the <s>received</s> shipping information against pre-stored information;

select at least one shipping carrier which matches the <s>received</s> shipping <u>information;</u><s>information; and</s>

display the selected shipping carrier based on the shipping <u>information;</u> <u>and</u><s>information.</s>

<u>accept at least one of a user identification number and a password for each department related to the at least one shipping carrier.</u>

17.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said client <u>sub-system</u><s>system</s> is configured with:

a displaying component for displaying at least one of a home page user interface, an input interface, a user interface displaying an optimum shipping method, a user interface displaying alternative options, a user interface displaying the user's final selection, and a user interface that facilitates printing of a label;

a displaying component for displaying at least one of a user interface to access maintenance home page, register a new carrier, modify an existing carrier, add locations, edit locations, add departments, edit department profiles, add users, and edit user profiles, and

a sending component for sending an inquiry to the server sub-systemsystem so that the server sub-systemsystem can process and download requestedthe requested information to the client sub-system.system.

18.   (original) A system according to Claim 17 wherein the sending component functions in response to a click of a mouse button.

19.   (original) A system according to Claim 17 wherein the sending component functions in response to a voice command.

20.   (original) A system according to Claim 17 wherein said system is further configured to be protected from access by unauthorized individuals.

21.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 17 wherein said server sub-systemsystem is further configured with:

a collection component for collecting information from users into the centralized database;

a tracking component for tracking information on an on-going basis;

a displaying component for displaying at least one of a home page user interface, an input interface, a user interface displaying an optimum shipping method, a user interface displaying alternative options, a user interface displaying the user's final selection, and a user interface that facilitates printing of a label;

a displaying component for displaying at least one of a user interface to access maintenance home page, register a new carrier, modify an existing carrier, add locations, edit locations, add departments, edit department profiles, add users, and edit user profiles;

a receiving component for receiving an inquiry from the client sub-systemsystem; and

an accessing component for accessing the centralized database to generate accessed information, said accessing component causing the accessed information to be displayed on the client sub-system.and causing the retrieved information to be displayed on the client system.

22.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 21 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured with a receiving component for receiving an inquiry to provide information from one of a plurality of users.

23.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 21 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured with a processing component for searching and processing received inquiries against said centralized databasethe data storage device containing a variety of information collected by the collection component.

24.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 21 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured with a retrieving component to retrieve information from the centralized database.

25.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 21 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured with an information fulfillment component that downloads the accessed informationrequested information after retrieving from the centralized database to a pluralitythe plurality of users in an orderthe order in which inquiriesthe requests were received by the receiving component.

26.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to:

receive at least one of a package type, a place of origin, a destination, a latest delivery date, a latest time, and a weight of a package;the package;

update the carrier information including the at least one carrier,at least one of a carrier, modify the at least onean existing carrier, add locations of the at least one

carrier, edit locations of the <u>at least one</u> carrier, add departments, edit department profiles, add users, and edit user profiles; and

store updated carrier information in the <u>centralized</u> database.

27.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server <u>sub-system</u>system further configured to enter information at least through one of a voice activation command and a device connected to the client <u>sub-system.</u>system.

28.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server <u>sub-system</u>system further configured to <u>update the carrier information and</u> store the updated carrier information against an identifier.

29.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server <u>sub-system</u>system further configured to:

track the carrier information on a real time basis; and

store the carrier information on a real time basis by updating stored information by adding <u>new</u>the new information to the centralized database on a real time basis to provide up-to-date carrier information instantaneously to the user upon a request.

30.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server <u>sub-system</u>system further configured to:

download requested information from <u>said server sub-system; and</u>a server system; and

display requested information on <u>the client sub-system</u>a client system in response to <u>an inquiry.</u>the inquiry.

31.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 30 wherein said server <u>sub-system</u>system further configured to print the requested information in a pre-determined format.

32.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to accept an inquiry from a user.

33.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 32 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to:

receive an inquiry from the client sub-systemsystem; and

display information on the client sub-system.system.

34.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 33 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to submit a request through at least one of pull down menus, check boxes, and hypertext links.

35.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 33 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to display an HTML document downloaded by the server sub-system.system.

36.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 33 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to display at least one alternative from various alternatives available to the user.

37.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 30 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to:

access the centralized database;

search the centralized database regarding a specificthe specific inquiry;

retrieve information from the centralized database; and

transmit the retrieved information to the client sub-systemsystem for display by the client sub-system.system.

38.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said server sub-systemsystem further configured to accept a request for maintenance home page after the user has been authenticated against pre-determined criteria.

39.   (currently amended) A system according to Claim 16 wherein said client <u>sub-system</u><s>system</s> configured to be a server for a network of customer devices.

40.   (currently amended) A system according to claim 16 wherein <u>said client sub-system is coupled to said server sub-system via a network, and</u> said network is one of a wide area network, a local area network an intranet and the Internet.